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ABSTRACT

Recent emphasis on process over method in second language teacher training is ascribed to: (1) difficulty in establishing the superiority of any single instructional approach; (2) increased emphasis on the contribution of the learner to instructional outcomes; and (3) emergence of process-oriented syllabus design. It is proposed that the process model, which negotiates content and procedure on the basis of student needs, perceptions, and learning styles, is the most direct and effective way of teaching, but that this requires that teachers develop self-assessment skills and sensitivity to learner needs and objectives. This approach was used in the practicum portion of a graduate training program for teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). First, trainees identified the areas of classroom practice with which they needed the most help. Subsequently, the five most frequently mentioned needs (giving instructions, meeting the needs of mixed-ability groups, meeting the demands of mainstream work, questioning techniques, and reinforcing and practicing new language patterns and structures) were addressed through microteaching. The third stage involved reassessment of trainees' needs and perceptions, and the fourth repeated the microteaching cycle. Preliminary observations find the process model to be effective in improving classroom teaching and increasing trainee confidence. (MSE)

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF ASSESSMENT SKILLS in TESOL Teacher Preparation

Alastair L McGregor

ED 367 154

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INTRODUCTION

I believe that most of us involved in the field of teacher education and development would admit to a considerable degree of frustration and disappointment about the rather meagre outcome of all our efforts, the students involved often being the most frustrated and disappointed of all. Our experience (and reading of the thoughts and experiences of others) are wide, our planning, and usually execution, are thorough and vigorous, and our ideals are undoubtedly high. As the outcome of the process we hope to see competent teachers with a thorough command of content and teaching approaches, and with the analytical skills which would enable them to choose and execute these appropriately in any particular situation, and with these we long to observe the development of a high degree of self awareness, initiative and true sensitivity to the needs and personalities of their students. We like to think of ourselves as being at the cutting edge of change and development not only in our individual students but in the profession. (I am speaking broadly about both pre-service and in-service or continuing teacher education).

Yet, as I say, many of us - while too experienced and sensible to expect total success - nevertheless experience real anxiety at what seems to us to be an unacceptably high level of failure to achieve these objectives with any but a few of our students. We have a sense of casting our pearls before rather unappreciative swine, and grimly hope they are not synthetic pearls. I will not defend my assertion that this is a common feeling throughout the ranks of teacher educators (though I believe much writing confirms it) but at any rate admit to you that after 25 years in this section of the profession it is certainly my observation about my own courses and students.

My colleagues and I have therefore set about a modest reappraisal of our principles and approaches, one outcome being the procedure I should like to describe to you a little later, a procedure intended to build greater skills of self observation, self-analysis and self assessment, in our students.

It might be more important, however, to speak first of the particular strands of thinking and research which have influenced our re-evaluation. No sudden lights from heaven have struck us, of course, but over the past year or two we have become more aware of several elements that, even if not entirely absent or totally ignored by us in the past, have probably not been given enough weight in our thinking and procedures.

Firstly there is the increasing disillusionment with the series of approaches and methodologies that seem to pursue each other across our horizon with almost monotonous regularity, like sunshine and shadow on a windswept plain (as Conrad says). I hasten to say that this is not because we have not found these approaches useful in themselves. Far from it. Rather disillusionment has followed the never failing claim, or at least implication, that the latest approach is 'the' answer. It is the exclusivity of each approach that has come to raise a weary smile on the face of us practitioners. We have slowly learned that the communicative approach is not to be 'the' answer (For 'communicative' read functional/notional, cognitive code, direct etc etc according to your taste.) We have long ago learned (what classroom practitioners have always recognised) that all these approaches come to us value-laden and are in many cases totally unsuitable without major modification for application in the vast variety of socio-cultural situations in which they are supposed to operate. One thinks for example, of the stimulating (if slightly exaggerated!) analysis by Dr Sampson at a previous seminar of the values implicit in the communicative approach. (Sampson 1984). Yet this attitude of exclusivity persists. Some of us are old enough to remember the pronouncements of the high priests or gurus of the audio-lingual approach

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when teachers dared to suggest it wasn't (to put it mildly) being altogether successful! This was heresy. We know it's the answer, we've proved it not only on a theoretical base of learning theory and linguistic theory, but in our practical success with thousands of service men learning languages this way to meet post-war (or post invasion) needs. You must be doing it wrong! Remember? - some of you?

Nor, in spite of decades of experience has that kind of attitude been finally laid to rest; it just gets re-attached to the latest orthodoxy.

So, a few weeks ago I received this written comment from an external examiner (who shall remain nameless) on some examination candidates

> ".....candidates itemised anticipated language use and language to be modelled by the pupils from the teacher. Such a view of ESL teaching completely denies (!) the role of peer group interaction and the learning that pupils do outside the classroom, from the community, media etc. It represents a return to (a named approach) which was shown to be (!) restrictive and based on erroneous notions of the language learning process."

Nor is the disillusionment merely impressionistic and ill-founded. A never-ending stream of research, hundreds of thousands of man-hours of effort and perspiration have gone into the attempt to show the superior effects of some particular approach. Perhaps the best summary of the situation is to be found in Allwright's (1988) typically incisive account of the history of observational studies in the classroom and the very common failure (to the disappointment of those who wanted to prove otherwise) to establish any particular superiority in terms of language learning for one or the other approach. So obvious was this that in surveying a large number of studies, Long (1983) even asked the question "Does Second Language Instruction Make a Difference?" While the answer would, fortunately for us teachers, seem clearly to be yes, there was no clear evidence that any one particular form of instruction made more of a difference than another. Thus the days of confidently presenting, illustrating, modelling, encouraging in practice AN approach for our students have gone. Instead we find ourselves with a bank of approaches and activities which all have their usefulness when applied to appropriate situations and needs. We all, I trust, remain eternally grateful for Chomsky's memorable warning 25 years ago

> "In general the willingness to rely on 'experts' is a frightening aspect of contemporary political and social life. Teachers, in particular, have a responsibility to make sure that ideas and proposals are evaluated on their merits, and not passively accepted on grounds of authority, real or presumed.
>
> .....There is very little in psychology or linguistics (and dare we add, methodology and curriculum) that he can accept on faith" (Chomsky, 1966). (author's addition)

A second important influence has been the increasing emphasis that we ignore the learner's contribution at our peril, and I speak of the learner in the individual and group sense. The learners' needs, perceptions, moods, learning styles and strategies, as we well know, can very quickly make a nonsense of our thoroughly prepared curricula and lesson plans. Here, of course, is what makes us look so foolish when we try to insist on a method, an approach, indeed even when we are trying to establish whether any language teaching behaviour or device could be classified as 'good' or 'bad'! Politzer (1970) tried to do that and was forced to the conclusion that there were few, if any, absolutes:

> "In other words the very high complexity of the teaching process makes it very difficult to talk in absolute terms about 'bad' and 'good' teaching devices...
> The 'good' teacher is one who can make the right judgment as to what teaching device is the most valuable at any given moment."

or as Allwright (1972) put it when discussing the effects of using a particular technique or method:

> "It is, however, clear that much more than this is happening. People are interacting in a multiplicity of complex ways, as people, getting bored or even excited, getting encouraged or discouraged, more confident or less confident, and so on. It is a commonplace to assume that such events are important to learning, probably crucial, but this seems to have been largely left out of research on methodological comparisons."

It has fallen to me several times at preceding seminars here to emphasise this aspect from our own experiences in Australia and elsewhere and my observation is that people on the whole listen politely then shrug it off as too complex a matter to take into account seriously. I suggest to you that we dare not fail to take it into account no matter what degree of complexity it introduces. Let me give you a small group example from just a few weeks ago - Several of my colleagues and I take some advanced English classes for fairly high level, mostly professional migrants to Australia. It fell to one of my colleagues, (a new colleague, by the way,) to take a unit on the Arts, the language of the Arts. (The class was composed of a mixture of Eastern Europeans, Chinese, Indonesians, students from the Middle East and so on). He is an open and progressive teacher so on his first visit to the group he invited them to suggest what topics they would like, felt they needed, to have covered. Before the afternoon was finished a delegation from the class arrived at the door of the Director of Programmes. "Please remove this teacher; he doesn't know what he should be doing. Wants US to tell HIM... etc." We experienced this on a larger scale in Australia when a complete and fine curriculum prepared for the Adult Migrant Education Service more or less had to be abandoned. It had been prepared mostly with Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees in mind. Suddenly a great number of Eastern European refugees started arriving. They said "We don't want to know about supermarkets, and visits to doctors' surgeries. Just tell us - Is this the subjunctive or not?!" We cannot ignore the learners, plan in a vacuum or even plan on our perceptions of their needs. They may have different ideas; they march to the beat of another drum altogether, from the one we are banging so enthusiastically: they learn what they want to learn, not what we want them to learn. Remember the findings of Felix who concluded that much of the linguistic output of school language learners "could only be understood as essentially random behaviour, but that otherwise their classroom use of language suggested that they were using 'natural' processes of language acquisition rather than those the teaching was designed to promote." (Felix, 1981).

A third major influence which more or less complements the first two has been our growing acceptance of the 'process' syllabus, though whether this is truly a syllabus in the sense of other syllabi or really a procedure is a question in my mind.) Perhaps in the sense that it is, as Michael Breen says, a plan relating to the major decisions which teachers and learners need to make during classroom language learning which then draws upon the bank of classroom activities and tasks of which I spoke earlier, we may indeed accept it as a syllabus. (Breen, 1987).

It is unquestionably the three foregoing factors i.e. disappointment with outcomes, disillusionment with the succession of the latest 'in' approaches, and the necessity of involving the learners in the decision making process if we are taking their contributions seriously at all, that has predisposed us to make at least a start in applying the process model to our teacher education courses. In this model Breen suggests in his state of the art article on "Contemporary Paradigms in Syllabus Design" there are questions regarding three important aspects of language work which require shared consideration by teachers and learners viz.

(a) questions concerning participation e.g. who works with whom? pairs? small groups? and with whom does the teacher work?

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(b) questions regarding procedures e.g. which particular activity will we undertake? how? what resources? for how long? how will we evaluate? and

(c) questions about subject matter e.g. what focus? what learning purpose?

It is these last two which are most often unilaterally decided by the syllabus designer. The Process syllabus, however, provides teachers and learners with "the explicit task of (jointly) prioritising, selecting, subdividing and sequencing what is to be achieved in an on-going way " (Breen, ibid).

There is little doubt that to those of us used to a more prescriptive and teacher-centred model the process procedure appears threatening and perhaps at first sight rather unstructured. But a sound case is made for it particularly in relation to two very practical situations with which there cannot be a teacher here unacquainted.

Firstly, no classroom group is ever working through one syllabus; in fact the classroom in most cases provides a meeting place of three syllabi - often there is a pre-planned and sometimes external syllabus which the teacher reinterprets for implementation, secondly there are learner syllabi of all shapes, types and sizes; while the third is the syllabus which is worked out day by day and is the inevitable synthesis of the first two (or is it three?) The Process syllabus is designed to facilitate this synthesis through a decision-making process undertaken by teachers and learners together.

Then secondly this process allows us to cope with the ever changing needs of teaching/learning experience in the classroom. The learners' needs, perceptions problems, achievements are continually changing and developing. Says Breen "The process syllabus is a recognition that any syllabus, however carefully planned, is never worked through as the plan itself proposed because teachers and learners are engaged in a complex process which requires the re-interpretation and re-creation of the plan if it is to be made real" (Breen, ibid) and requires it, one may add, almost daily.

One of the possible snags with such an approach I have already illustrated, and this has been emphasised by several researchers. For example Gebhard, in his discussion of collaborative supervision in his article on 'Models of Supervision' (Gebhard, 1984) has pointed out that there is a difficulty in that the ideal and real are sometimes far apart. "Not all teachers are willing to share equally in a symmetrical collaborative decision-making process. A colleague of mine, from a Middle Eastern country, (he says) remarked that if, as a supervisor, he attempted to get teachers to share ideas with him, the teachers would think he was not a very good supervisor" - a direct echo of our experience at W.A.C.A.E. Nor does one have to be dealing with those from very different socio-cultural situations to experience such reactions. Does this mean that the Process model is inapplicable in certain situations? By no means - it merely means that the approach to such joint decision-making must be more gradual and circumspect. To abandon it and retreat to a prescriptive model would surely be to give away two of our most important objectives before we even start viz. the objective of having autonomous, self analytical and self assessing teachers on the one hand and on the other missing entirely the opportunity to show what we mean practically by working with our students to develop sensitivity and response to their learning goals and strategies; the classic "don't do as we do, do as we tell you" situation. For these reasons I feel that while it is not entirely absent, Breen may have somewhat missed the opportunity in his rationale for the process syllabus to stress the development of the autonomous learner; he does stress the development of the group decision making process. Even more surprising to me is that in their in many ways very helpful report on the results of a questionnaire survey of the Practicum in TESOL, Richards and Crookes asked supervisors or instructors responsible for practicum programmes in a wide range of TESOL (or parallel) courses to respond by, amongst other things, ranking 8 objectives for a practicum as follows (these are the rankings arrived at as a result of the survey):

1 To provide practical experience in classroom teaching
2 To apply instruction from theory courses
3 To provide opportunities to observe master teachers

4.5 To give feedback on teaching techniques
4.5 To develop increased awareness of personal teaching style
6 To develop lesson-planning skills
7 To develop ability to select/adapt materials
8 To become familiar with specific methods (e.g., the Silent Way)

It may be significant that, while mentioning objectives like lesson planning, teaching techniques, applying instruction etc other objectives like learning how to analyse, how to be sensitive to the needs of learners are not mentioned, much less that the skill of involving learners in the planning process might be one of the main outcomes/objectives of the practicum. Nor did the report suggest that in the wide variety of skills mentioned by respondents in their 'open' replies was this even mentioned. (Richards and Crookes, 1988).

The thesis of this paper may be stated very simply. There are two objectives we need to build into our teacher education courses, objectives that may have been underplayed by some of us,

1 The development of self analytical, self assessment skills to bring about autonomous lasting growth and development in teachers.

2 The ability to be sensitive to and take into account the needs and objectives of learners and to involve them in a joint planning process in our courses.

If these objectives are accepted as valid then it is the contention of this paper that while there may be other ways of trying to achieve them the most direct and effective way will be by the application of the same objectives and procedures to our own teacher education courses i.e. working not to a prescriptive model - - 'we know how you should teach language if you're going to teach it well' but through a process model which negotiates the content and procedure of the course on the basis of their needs, their perceptions, and their learning styles.

It will be obvious to you all that the procedures I now describe are far from fulfilling that ideal; instead, they are the first tentative steps towards such a model, the first steps towards involving course participants in planning, and in reassuring ourselves that the process is worth pursuing. The situation in which my colleagues and I are working is as follows: We are responsible for a post graduate programme in TESOL; post graduate in the sense that almost all participants are degreed and trained teachers, though they have not necessarily undertaken previous studies in TESOL. The group of participants, having completed a common study on principles of language analysis is divided into three strands corresponding to their intentions regarding the areas in which they wish to teach on completion of the course, in fact almost all are already teaching in these areas or have done so in the past, but without specific qualifications. These areas are teaching English as a second language to adult migrants, teaching English as a second language in schools, and thirdly teaching English as a foreign language i.e. in a non-English speaking environment, though this latter group includes the teaching of English to overseas students who come temporarily to Australia for the purpose, at least in the first instance of learning English.

Adding to the interest of this experiment is the fact that each of these three classes is working not only towards a qualification awarded by the College but is also concurrently working towards an externally awarded Diploma. The strands respectively work to obtain one of three Royal Society of Arts Diplomas i.e. the Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language to Adults, the Diploma in teaching English across the Curriculum in Multi-lingual schools, or finally the Diploma in teaching English as a Foreign Language to Adults. The reasons for adopting these external diplomas (for those who want them) concurrently with the College qualifications need not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that this places us in the all-too-familiar situation of many teachers where the curriculum is not entirely under their own control but is constrained by an external syllabus, external examinations or the like. It is sometimes argued that this effectively rings the deathknell for

a process procedure but we have not found it to be so and would agree with Breen's contention that "the Process syllabus can be appropriate to such a situation because it addresses two of the major problems entailed in the implementation of an external syllabus; how to relate such a syllabus to the internal syllabus of a group of learners and how to gradually create the classroom syllabus of that group which must be a synthesis of external and learners' syllabuses." (Breen, 1988)

We decided that a suitable starting point for trying out these procedures would be the teaching practicum which forms part of each of the courses. There were four reasons for choosing to start with the practicum

1 Whatever arguments there may be about what elements should be found in teacher education courses for TESOL, the practicum is virtually universally agreed upon and identified, particularly by participants, as the most crucial part of the course.

2 Paradoxically the practicum is also the element with which most dissatisfaction is expressed both on a practical and theoretical level. Marion Williams summarised the problems well when she wrote:

"Classroom observations have, however, always presented problems for teachers and trainers, and generally cause considerable stress and upset on the part of the teacher. Implicit in the approach are various other assumptions: that teaching pedagogy is something that can be both taught and learnt; that observers can tell what is 'good' and 'bad' in a classroom according to some prescribed checklist; and that telling teachers what they are doing, 'right' and 'wrong', will in fact lead to better classroom teaching

Even if one believes that doing this will lead to better teaching, one must ask whether this is in fact the best way of achieving better teaching, and whether individual teachers can and should teach in different ways, in different classroom situations.
(Williams, 1989)

3 The fact that in our particular type of in-service course the Practicum is almost invariably carried out in the teachers' classrooms with students with whom they are very familiar and with the curriculum to a large degree under their own control meant that this was particularly suitable for experimenting with negotiated work.

4 Fourthly, we had the stimulation of much interesting work which had been carried out here in Singapore and reported by Marion Williams under the auspices of the British Council in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, in which a developmental view of classroom observation was posited as against the traditional prescriptive types of supervision which teachers find so threatening and very much at odds with the pupil centred view of teaching which our theory professes. (Williams, ibid)

Our objective therefore was to move from a teacher-educator centred model, not merely to a trainee-centred model, though certainly much more attention would be paid to their views and needs, but ultimately, through them, to a pupil or learner centred model with the focus on the classroom. (I should say that I am concentrating in this paper on the procedures as they affected the teachers working in the 'schools' strand of our courses; my colleagues will later undoubtedly report on the full project, but this will give us a manageable starting point).

STAGE ONE: DISCOVERING PARTICIPANT-PERCEIVED NEEDS (First survey.)

At an early stage of the course, therefore, after about two or three weeks, participants were invited to list those areas of classroom practices and teaching for which they felt the greatest need of help. This timing was chosen to strike a balance between possibly too great a degree of disorientation by complete beginners as against waiting so long that the thinking of participants might, even if unconsciously, have been directed by the course content discussed in curriculum classes. The first sessions of the course had been occupied by linking the curriculum work to be considered with previous studies in language analysis and beginning to look at analysis of needs. Three features marked that first statement of needs by the participants:

1 First, and perhaps not surprisingly in those early days of the course, the range of topics mentioned was very wide. They covered many areas of classroom management e.g. working with groups, getting planned tasks completed. Then there were fairly basic teaching skills applied to the TESOL classroom e.g. questioning, giving instructions, creation of and use of visual materials. And finally there was a long list of specific content areas with which help was wanted e.g. reinforcing new structures, enriching vocabulary, tense continuity, unfamiliar sound patterns, teaching poetry etc. The wide range meant that it was not easy to discover foci for the follow-up work - only a small number of needs were mentioned by several of the participants.

2 The second feature was the interestingly clear emergence of a quite different group of concerns from the responses of participants in other strands of the course. There has been over quite a few years considerable discussion on whether too much distinction may have been made between different areas of TESOL, teaching ESL as against EFL, teaching adults as against children and so on. There have been suggestions of unnecessary distinctions and indeed perhaps even of tendencies towards empire building in making these distinctions

   Without any axe to grind and without the desire to exaggerate (there were obviously many skills that were mentioned by all groups) I have to report that quite clearly a different group of concerns emerged from the replies of the TESL in multi lingual schools participants, and notice that these emerged long before any course influence could have affected them. Specific to this group were repeated mentions of language work associated with the mainstream areas of school curriculum e.g. mathematics or social studies activities and management skills arising from this particular situation e.g. how to handle the withdrawal of a group of ESL students from a mainstream class or (more commonly) the skills and techniques required to work as a resource ESL teacher in a mainstream class, team teaching, principles for the grouping of first and second language learners etc. Already this trend, (to become much stronger in later responses and discussions) was evident, even at this early stage.

3 Thirdly, more negatively, except implicitly in some responses about grouping and mainstream needs the emphasis could be said to be largely teacher centred: techniques, strategies, skills, and while it was not entirely absent there is little emphasis on sensitivity to pupil needs and none at all on involving learners in planning and decision making.

STAGE 2: FIRST STEPS TOWARDS MEETING THE NEEDS

After discussion with the course participants the five most frequently mentioned needs were selected for consideration through a modified version of micro-teaching work (Notice the compromise with our process procedures ideals. Certainly the participants had been allowed to participate in decisions - indeed largely to control them - on the subject matter and learning purposes, but they had comparatively little say on the procedures to be followed.) The five areas selected were

1 Giving instructions
2 Catering for the needs of mixed ability groups
3 Meeting the demands of mainstream work
4 Questioning techniques
5 Reinforcing and practising new patterns and structures.

The participants were divided into groups of about seven who followed this procedure:

- The participants chose their own groups and topics.
- Out of each group two participants volunteered to 'teach' their peers.
- The 'teachers' were expected to teach for about 10 minutes with prepared lesson notes. They would explain to the class

  (a) the content; purpose of the lesson, what preceded/was to follow this extract

  (b) the roles they wished their peers to take - crucial in such situations as 'mixed ability groups' and in all cases in indicating levels of proficiency, age, previous knowledge etc. (It was noted that these roles were faithfully and often enthusiastically adopted!)

- The first stage in each session consisted of the other six members of the group (in the absence of the 'teacher' about to give the lesson) discussing and formulating a preliminary list of criteria they would look for, for the skill under discussion.
- The 'teacher' then set and taught the lesson, with the class taking the roles assigned to them.
- The tutor took little or no part in these procedures, certainly not in any directive sense and contented herself with facilitating and videotaping the lesson and interaction/discussion.
- Following the teaching the group spent approximately thirty minutes discussing the lesson in order to establish a list of criteria for the skill (again the tutor took little directive part in these discussions.) Thus, for example, under the heading of 'giving instructions' the group arrived at this list after the first lesson and discussion.

1 Give precise instructions.
2 Give clear instructions
3 Demonstrate visually
4 Gain pupils' attention
5 Give pupils a purpose for the activity
6 Voice - stress the important word in the sentence
7 Allow for repetition

8 Cater for individual pupils
9 Monitor pupils' completion of task
10 Check pupils understand instructions.

The procedure was then repeated with the second teacher minus the initial discussion, as the criteria established from the first lesson served as the check-list for the second. The criteria established after the discussion on the second lesson (the video tape was used to refresh memories of precise strategies and events) were usually a refinement and extension of the first list into more detailed points e.g. points added to the above list included the helpfulness of rephrasing instructions, using body and gestures to clarify meaning, not speaking too quickly etc.

This second stage was then concluded by the preparation from the criteria established by the group of a set of questions which could be used by participants when planning for a lesson and when evaluating their own performance. The questionnaire could also be used by the visiting supervisor when discussing lessons. Thus it would be the group's own criteria which would be used rather than any externally imposed evaluation of 'good' or 'poor' behaviours.

STAGE 3: REASSESSING NEEDS AND PERCEPTIONS

With stage three we entered the second cycle of negotiation and decision making. Half way through the course the participants were asked again to list those areas of classroom practice and teaching for which they now felt the need of further work and help.

Again three features marked the selection by participants, now quite familiar and comfortable with the procedure:

1 There were many basic similarities with the first list. Many of the skills then mentioned were repeated but with this difference: there tended to be a much narrower focus, a stating of the topic within very specific settings e.g. in repeating the topic 'giving instructions' the proposed setting now was 'Giving instructions to absolute beginners in the language."

2 The first major difference from the initial selection was that the second list was very much shorter and less wideranging. The trends observed in the first selection had become much more pronounced half-way through the course. They were concerned with working across the curriculum i.e. in the mainstream classes whether it was with group work, assessment or in team teaching situations. In other words the differences from the selections of the EFL strand became even more obvious. The two situations and needs are viewed by participants as being quite distinct and with different requirements.

3 The second distinction was the emergence for the first time of perceived needs in analysing, assessing and responding to the needs of bilingual children. The needs of pupils at last emerged as a factor to be genuinely considered though still not to the controlling degree that espousers of process procedures might have wished.

STAGE 4 then saw a repeat of the micro-teaching cycle which proved to require little modification accept in purely technical matters (e.g. better sound recording of the group discussions) from the initial procedures.

Once again the set of self analysing and self assessing criteria were transformed into question form to be used as major areas of concern and emphasis within lessons being taught by participants in their own classrooms and observed by supervisors. The procedure followed was that in planning for a particular lesson the course participant would indicate in addition to normal objectives and procedures the particular focus area which he or she wished to concentrate on in their specific lesson. Participants were encouraged to use the criteria questions in planning for their teaching, and initial pre-teaching discussions with the course tutor/supervisor focussed on how the criteria had been applied in the plan.

Notice that to this point of the experiment participants have for obvious reasons, been encouraged to focus on only one of the selected criteria areas (e.g. catering for the needs of mixed ability groups) for any one lesson. Post lesson discussion with the observer while not concerned exclusively with the selected area have certainly had this as the major area of concern each time, with the candidates being encouraged to analyse and assess their own performance in the light of their own criteria.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

What have we learned from this still incomplete attempt to apply process procedures to this element of a teacher preparation course in order to develop self analytical and self assessment skills in the participants?

While findings are largely impressionistic at this stage and must therefore be expressed tentatively and cautiously, the following seem to be emerging:

1 The process procedures involving participants in decision making and planning for these elements of the course work appear to be bringing about far more effective changes in classroom teaching behaviours than our old prescriptive or transmission model ever did. While we would like to believe that this is because of the procedures adopted we have to be cautious about this conclusion as the possibility remains that this could arise simply from the more intensive work carried out on specific elements of classroom procedures.

2 In spite of the novelty of being consulted on subject matter and the construction of their own criteria, course participants undertook these procedures with apparent ease and competence, arising no doubt from the fact that they were all experienced teachers accustomed to the decision making process, though perhaps not in this particular context.

3 Nevertheless the repeated warnings by previous investigators that the process procedure was not equally welcomed by all participants proved true; a small minority still prefer the prescriptive rather than investigative model.

4 One unquestionable outcome has been the lowering of the discomfort levels so often reported by participants in association with classroom observations by supervisors. With the transformation of this element from an assessing prescriptive approach into an investigative, collaborative and self analytical procedure using their own criteria, participants consistently report that what was previously 'teaching supervision' has become much less threatening and conversely more useful as a developmental and cooperative process.

5 One small almost 'side' discovery was the usefulness of role-play in the modified micro-teaching procedures. While the weaknesses of peer rather than pupil teaching in micro-teaching have often been discussed, in this context the requirement for participants to imagine themselves into the particular roles assigned to them by the 'teachers' in their groups was several times referred to

later in teaching sessions as helping with building sensitivity to needs and procedures that relate to particular students. A couple made it clear that they had particular students of their own in mind when carrying out the role-play.

6 If there is an element of weakness in the procedures described it lies in the gap between the participants' perceptions of their needs and problems and the perceptions and needs of the language learners themselves, their pupils. There is an as yet not entirely bridged gap between what some investigators have described as a problem solving approach and one based upon classroom decision making and investigation (Breen, Candlin, Dam and Gabrielson, 1989). Certainly the link between the micro-teaching sessions and actual tutor/participant discussion of samples of classroom teaching is helping to bridge that gap but it would be good to see the classroom situation and learner needs become the focus of course work submitted by participants to a greater degree.

7 The question of whether the process model is helping to produce more autonomous teachers who are themselves willing to involve their learners in the decision making process: these questions remain at this early stage open, though we might without being accused of exaggeration say that for at least the first part of the question the signs are good.

8 Finally the positive response and apparently favourable outcomes of the adoption of a process model for this element of our courses may point to the possibility that a larger proportion or perhaps even the whole course could profitably be constructed on this Model.

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